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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 000628

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [CU](#) [CA](#)  
SUBJECT: CANADA TO CONSIDER "DAY OF SOLIDARY WITH CUBA"  
EVENTS

REF: STATE 46997

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) In separate conversations with PolMinCouns, senior policy advisor to the Foreign Minister Ross O'Connor and Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean James Lambert of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) expressed Canada's willingness to consider organizing events related to the May 21 "Day of Solidarity with Cuba." O'Connor noted that DFAIT had not budgeted for such programming, but expressed interest in low cost approaches such as a DVC with Cuban dissidents, a reception with family members of political prisoners, and/or op ed pieces. Lambert indicated that the Privy Council Office was now also seized with this issue and would examine possible events. He underscored, however, that Canada usually was careful to handle Cuba policy with a "Made in Canada" approach, and would not wish to be seen as copying the U.S. or doing such activities at the U.S. behest. He added that Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Wilson would likely seek to discuss the "Day of Solidarity" directly with Commerce Secretary Gutierrez.

12. (C) Lambert emphasized, however, that protection and promotion of human rights in Cuba had been front and center in Canada's talking points during a recent visit to Cuba by Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz as well as a visit to Ottawa by the Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister. He noted that the Cuban DFM was visibly taken aback by the "stern" comments on the human rights situation in Cuba that Deputy Foreign Minister Len Edwards delivered during a "considerable portion" of their meeting. He assured PolMinCouns that Canada would continue to advance human rights and democracy in its own dealings with the Cuban regime.

13. (SBU) PAS is separately contacting WHA/PDA about a possible op ed piece for use by Embassy in Canada.

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